Live Free or Die?
Finding Marijuana Middle Ground in Extreme Times:
*Lessons from New Hampshire*

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Workshop Objectives

• **Learning Objective 1**: Participants will be able to analyze their state’s current marijuana policy landscape to find gaps or areas for potential action.

• **Learning Objective 2**: Participants will be able to articulate key public health principles in developing marijuana policies.

• **Learning Objective 3**: Participants will be able to articulate key ‘child safety and responsible use tips’ relative to therapeutic cannabis/medical marijuana laws.

• **Learning Objectives 4**: Participants will be able to learn effective techniques around developing messaging and building public health and prevention coalitions to oppose marijuana legalization in their communities.
Substance Misuse Data: Marijuana
NH Youth & Young Adults

video credit: drug free NH
NH Data Summary: *Marijuana* Youth & Young Adults

- LOW perception of risk *(within the top 10 states)*
- HIGH rates of use as compared to the U.S. *(within the top 10 states)*
Alcohol or Drug Misuse or Dependency in Past Yr.


Figure 1: CURRENT AND PAST YEAR SUBSTANCE USE AMONG 18-25 YEAR OLDS (NSDUH 2014)

- Current Binge Drinking
- Current Marijuana Use
- Non-medical Pain Relievers in the Past Year
- Alcohol Dependence or Abuse in the Past Year

Notes:
1 Northeast Region includes: CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI and VT.
Landscape of Cannabis Policy in NH

Therapeutic Cannabis
- Original law carefully crafted and narrowly drawn to ensure that individuals with specifically identified medical conditions and symptoms would have access to a therapeutic product through 4 alternative treatment centers (ATC’s).
- Qualifying conditions are added each year
- Health Care provider only certifies that a patient has a qualifying condition. They do not prescribe cannabis.

Decriminalization of Marijuana
- Up until this year all New England States had decriminalized marijuana except for New Hampshire
- Decriminalization of marijuana legislation had passed by the House of Representatives by large margin for several years.
- Bills traditionally stalled in the Senate
- Decriminalization of ¾ ounce of marijuana was signed by Governor Sununu in 2017.

Legalization of Marijuana
- NH Legislature has consistently voted down marijuana legalization over the past 5 years.
- 2017 - Two bills introduced legislation in New Hampshire that will legalize for personal use up to 1 ounce of marijuana for individuals 21 years and over.
  - SB 233 failed in the Senate 19-4
  - HB 656 retained in the House
- A study committee, HB 215, passed this year.
Finding Middle of the Road...
Therapeutic Cannabis and Child Safety

- Reviewed material being distributed:
  - by the NH Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS)
  - each NH Therapeutic Cannabis dispensary location
  - did a nationwide “scan” for any prevention/public safety information relative to therapeutic cannabis

HUGE GAP = CHILD SAFETY INFO
Therapeutic Cannabis and Child Safety

• Convened meetings with prevention partners, DHHS staff, and Therapeutic Cannabis dispensary management staff to finalize our two educational documents.
Landscape of Cannabis Policy in NH

• Prevention partners and New Futures strongly opposed decriminalization in the past.

• Significant ‘sea change’ regarding marijuana decriminalization policy in the New Hampshire legislature within last year.

• Understood a bill would pass both bodies and have the support the Governor.
Putting Public Health Principles in Marijuana Policy Reform

Finding Common Ground

• Sensible marijuana policy reform has the potential to reduce criminal penalties that can lead to a lifetime of harsh consequences and to address social and racial inequities in New Hampshire’s criminal justice system.

• Attempts to decriminalize small amounts of marijuana must take place in conjunction with efforts to prevent marijuana use and promote early screening and treatment of adolescents with marijuana use problems.

• Limiting minors' access to marijuana and marijuana-infused products is important both to protect young children from accidental ingestion and to prevent marijuana use among adolescents.
Putting Public Health Principles in Marijuana Policy Reform in NH

• Public health and prevention principles must be included in marijuana policy reform legislation:
  o Mandatory screening and risk assessments for young offenders, as well as connections to treatment
  o A portion of the revenue from marijuana fines must go to evidence-informed prevention education programs
  o Must have provisions or plans in place on how to deal with marijuana-infused products and edibles
Putting Prevention Principles in Marijuana Policy Reform in NH

HB 640 passed both House and Senate and signed by Governor:
Putting Prevention Principles in Marijuana Policy Reform in NH

- Reduces the penalty for possession of up to 3/4 of an ounce of marijuana
- Allows those under the age of 21 found in possession of the drug, to waive the fine if they undergo a substance use risk assessment.
- Designates fines to be used for substance misuse prevention programs.
- Creates a graduated fine for multiple offenses.
- Provides stricter penalties for the possession and negligent storage of marijuana concentrates or infused products.
Opposing Legalization of Marijuana in NH

Execute a targeted anti-commercialization campaign

• Develop coalitions of likely (prevention networks, law enforcement, healthcare, youth-serving orgs, etc) and unlikely partners; (faith leaders, chambers of commerce, trade associations, etc)

• Create informative, accurate public dialogue about marijuana commercialization through effective messaging

• Polling both public and policy makers

• Stress economics- release report on expected revenue and impacts to businesses/industry
Resources to Assist with Anti-Legalization Efforts

Advocating for Legal Reform: Just because legalization is a bad idea, doesn't mean we need to incarcerate users or give out criminal records. There is a middle ground between the extremes.

Preventing Big Tobacco 2.0
The marijuana industry is likely to be the Big Tobacco of our time. Let's prevent another industry from profiting off of addiction.

https://learnaboutsam.org/
✓ Work with partners in your state to assess the current “marijuana landscape”, if you have not already done so. Identify gaps and areas of opportunity.
  - Therapeutic/Medical use
  - Decriminalization
  - Legalization

✓ Don’t reinvent the wheel!! Reach out to prevention and public health colleagues across the nation. We are all in this together.
  - Washington and Colorado have great public safety information material specific to recreational marijuana:
    - http://learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/factsheets.htm
    - https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/categories/services-and-information/marijuana
If you are looking for public safety information relative to therapeutic cannabis/medical marijuana, reach out to NH:

- http://drugfreenh.org/component/k2/item/148-therapeutic-cannabis
- tfowlerconsulting@gmail.com

ALWAYS ASK PERMISSION BEFORE YOU BORROW!

- Content may not be able to be shared (worst case scenario)
- Folks may want you cite their organizations – make sure you have correct name, logo and contact information (best case scenario)
QUESTIONS?

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